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QUESTION OF THE VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS IN ANY PART OF THE WORLD, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO COLONIAL AND OTHER DEPENDENT COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES

Joint written statement submitted by the World Federation of Democratic Youth, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status, the International Alliance of Women, the Women's International Democratic Federation, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts and the World Student Christian Federation, non-governmental organizations in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement, which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV).

[3 February 1998]

Human rights of women in Sudan

1. On 1 December 1997, a group of women representing the Sudanese Women's Alliance organized a peaceful march to protest against the abduction and dispatch of schoolchildren and young military recruits to the war zones in southern and eastern Sudan and the Nuba Mountains. Forced conscription of male secondary school leavers and random abduction of likely youngsters for military purposes are currently intensified by the military regime of General Omar El Bashir on a large scale. Methods used for conscription and training of the forced military recruits are primitive and well below the minimum safety standards observed under such conditions. Youngsters are poorly trained (less than two months) and hastily deployed to the war zones. Some of them are directly flown to the war zones to ensure speedy dispatch to the battlefields.

2. The Government's fierce abduction campaigns against youngsters as well as the poor training and high causality rate among the forced young military recruits have extremely frightened families, in particular women, over the fate of their children. Protesters have gathered in front of the United Nations building in Khartoum (Sudan) intending to deliver a written statement to the United Nations Representative in Sudan. The note criticized the Government for sending schoolchildren to the battlefields and requested interference of the United Nations to put an immediate halt to this practice.

3. The security forces responded to the peaceful demonstration with violence. Brutal methods and excessive force were used to disrupt the peaceful gathering. As a result many women were terrorized or severely injured. Some women were admitted to hospitals for medical treatment while others were arbitrarily arrested and summarily tried without proper legal procedure. They were denied any access to legal counselling. They have been fined (25,000 Sudanese pounds) and lashed (10 lashes each). One of the women was sentenced to 40 lashes for not conforming with the Islamic dress and wearing trousers. Flogging was inflicted on the majority of women in public without any medical check-up or examinations. They were detained in inhuman conditions till the early hours on 2 December 1997. We strongly condemn this cruel, degrading and inhumane treatment imposed by the fundamentalist military government on the Sudanese women. Judging by the regime's own legislation and Sudanese culture, such humiliation of women is a crime abhorrent to the Islamic faith and all canons of civilized government.

4. Among the participants who faced this ordeal are women politicians, human rights activists, doctors, lawyers, trade unionists and youth leaders such as Ms. Salawatt Mustafa, Member of the Executive Committee of the banned Sudanese Youth Union. The list also includes the following names:

1. Dr. Suad Ibrahim Ahmed
2. Sara Nugdalla
3. Nimat Malik
4. Sara Hamad el-Nil
5. Siham Adam
6. Widad Mohamed
7. Kuthur Hassan Ahmed
8. Zahara Mohamed Ahmed Fadil
9. Amina Ahmed Osman
10. Asmaa el-Sayed Ali
11. Salwa el-said
12. Samia Ahmed Osman
13. Zainab Ali el-Oumda Abdelmajid
14. Samira Osman
15. Sara Gusm-el-Saied
16. Amal Osman

17. Had el-Raid el-Mahi
18. Hayat Mahmoud
19. Iman Mohamed el-Hassan
20. Iman Abdelrahim
21. Sara el-Jinaid
22. Tyesser ...
23. Amina Ahmed Mustafa
24. Khansaa Omar Sowar-el-Zahab
25. Sitina Mohamed salih
26. Huda Ahmed Abdalla
27. Ibtihaj Ibrahim
28. Sakina Abdalla Kambal
29. Lilian Mohamed salih Hussain
30. Bakhita Ahmed el-Shaikh
31. Fatima Kamil Mohamed Khair
32. Naglla Saad Ahmed el-Shaikh
33. Sakina el-Jinaid
34. Intisar Sidig
35. Naglla Ahmed Musa
36. Fawzia Ahmed el-Fadil
37. Manal Mohamed Ahmed Mahjoub
38. Samira Talib Ibrahim
39. Amani Babiker

5. It is regrettable that this barbaric act is not an isolated incident. A series of similar crimes had been committed by the government security forces against the Sudanese women in recent years. On 23 August 1997, a group of female students from al-Ahfad University in Omdurman who had been on their way back home in university buses were detained and flogged in one of the Public Order Courts. They were accused of wearing obscene clothes that violate the vague Islamic female dress code. In 1990 the Government executed 28 Army officers within 24 hours of their arrest following a foiled coup attempt. Widows, children and members of the families of these officers used to organize peaceful gatherings in front of the Republican Palace every year to commemorate this tragedy. Usually, they are arrested, harassed, beaten and detained by the security forces.

6. On different occasions women, especially educated or politically conscious women, including students, were killed, arrested, incommunicado detained, tortured, humiliated and massively dismissed from public services. The killing of women was mainly caused by bullets shot by the security forces during demonstrations such as the case of Ms. Mushair Abdalla who was shot dead by the security forces in the middle of September 1996. At least three more females were killed in this way since December 1989. A girl child (three years old) succumbed to death on 3 April 1997 as a result of intensive use of tear gas by the security forces to disrupt a religious gathering in Khartoum North (Bahri).

7. Ms. Amal Gabralla, a medical doctor, was detained for two months in the wake of the doctors' strike of 1990. Ms. Buthina Doka, a nurse, was accused of using radio transmission for communication with the Sudanese Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA). She was incommunicado detained for several months in one of the secret detention centres known as "Ghost Houses" before being transferred to the Women's Prison in Omdurman. As a result of severe torture and ill-treatment she lost her mental balance. On 28 November 1990 following a students' demonstration in Wad Madani (150 km south of Khartoum), a number of female students from al-Gezira University were arrested, flogged and had their hair partly shaven off their heads by the Government's militia forces at al-Farouq military camp.

8. Massive violations of human rights are committed against internally displaced women who live in squatter settlements surrounding Khartoum. These women who are usually originating from southern and western Sudan were forced to leave their homeland either by civil war or other reasons like drought. A

large portion of these women are either widows or the sole breadwinners for their households. As they are from rural backgrounds and relatively uneducated, it is impossible for them to get decent employment. They depend on petty trading on streets and public places or brewing of local alcohol. These women are regularly chased, harassed, beaten, subjected to exaggerated fines and have their utensils destroyed or confiscated by the so-called Public Order Police. Those charged with alcohol dealings are fined, have their properties destroyed and imprisoned.

9. The situation of women is especially dire in the war-affected regions of the country such as southern Sudan and the Nuba Mountains. As a direct result of war, horrifying accounts of fundamental rights violations against women were documented in these regions during the last few years. Besides the death and terror caused by the indiscriminate aerial bombardments of civilian targets, classical violations of fundamental rights committed against women, in particular young women, include rape, abduction of women for sexual comfort, forced labour and enslavement. As a result of these crimes and the loss of their children, either for enslavement or for military conscription, a large number of women are suffering from mental problems in the war zones. Major perpetrators of these blatant violations of fundamental rights are the security forces and government-sponsored militia groups such as the notorious Popular Defence Forces (PDF), Islamic Mujahideen and the tribal Murahaleen militia who regard women and children as legitimate war booty. Reports indicated that other warring factions mainly the pro-government southern Sudan Independence Movement (SSIM) is also responsible for some of these crimes against women in southern Sudan.

10. A number of regulations and laws that severely curtail women's rights were enacted in the Sudan since the present military junta ascended to power in June 1989. First and foremost is the Penal Code introduced in January 1991. Many observers considered this Penal Code as sharply incompatible with Sudan's obligations under international human rights treaty bodies to which the Sudan is a State party. As a matter of practice, in a male-dominated society governed by a fundamental ideology, women without distinction as to religion, race or creed are at best considered second-class citizens restrictions on their rights. As a direct consequence of the currently prevailing regulations in Sudan, women have been facing constant gender discrimination in social, political and economic life in the country. In the workplace, women are facing more restrictions targeting dismissal of the maximum possible number of them especially from sensitive positions. The presence of women in some government departments does not reflect the regime's genuine belief in the right of women to work, but a pragmatic stance dictated by necessity.

11. Freedom of movement of women is severely curtailed. In general women are not allowed to travel abroad unless in the company of a male guardian "muhram". In public transport women are segregated from their male companions and forcibly seated in a sealed area. In some regions, women are not allowed to walk on the streets or use taxis after sunset without the company of husbands. This comes in line with the Government's ultra-conservative Cultural Orientation Programme which dictates that the domain of a good Muslim woman is her home and she is either a mother or wife. In his consequent

reports before the General Assembly and the Commission on Human Rights, the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Sudan concluded that women in Sudan are facing the worst kind of human rights violations.

12. We are deeply concerned about the conditions of women in the Sudan and that they are constantly discriminated against, segregated, maltreated, humiliated and denied basic human rights. We call upon the Commission on Human Rights to further pressurize the military government in Khartoum to stop all sorts of violations of fundamental rights, especially women's human rights.

13. The Government of Sudan is further asked to observe the following:

(a) Comply with its obligations under international human rights treaties to which the Sudan is a State party;

(b) Put immediate end to the dispatch of schoolchildren and youngsters to the war zones;

(c) Stop violence and all forms of discrimination against women;

(d) Stop torture and release all political prisoners including women;

(e) Accede to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.